

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY BONN

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L MBABANE 0334

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XA, WZ, US

SUBJECT: THE UNITED STATES AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

REF: A. GABORONE 324 (NOTAL), B. DAR ES SALAAM 703 (NOTAL),

C. LONDON 3315

1. DURING LUNCHEON FOR VISITING EEC MISSION MARCH 4, CHARGE
DISCUSSED RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN RHODESIA WITH GOS MINISTER OF
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INDUSTRY, MINES AND TOURISM S. S. NXUMALO. NXUMALO SAID THAT

NOW THAT MOZAMBIQUE HAD CLOSED ITS BORDER WITH RHODESIA, SMITH-NKOMO NEGOTIATION HAD REACHED CRITICAL STAGE. UNLESS AN AGREEMENT IS REACHED IN MATTER OF DAYS, THESE TALKS WOULD BE OVERTAKEN BY EVENTS AND NKOMO WOULD NO LONGER BE A VIABLE POTENTIAL LEADER FOR RHODESIA. NXUMALO SAID THAT AS GUERRILLA WAR INTENSIFIED, NEW AND MORE RADICAL LEADERS WOULD ARISE IN RHODESIA, AS PREDICTED BY NYERERE (REF B).

2. NXUMALO SAID USG MIGHT STILL BE ABLE TO INFLUENCE THE SITUATION TOWARDS A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT RATHER THAN A BLOOD BATH IF IT ACTED COURAGEOUSLY AND QUICKLY. IF USG WERE TO MAKE PUBLIC STATEMENT URGING SMITH TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH NKOMO IMMEDIATELY AND STATING FLATLY THAT IF HE DID NOT USG WOULD BE ON THE SIDE OF THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS IN ANY CONFLICT, SMITH WOULD EITHER MAKE A DEAL WITH NKOMO OR RESIGN AND GO INTO EXILE. IF THIS HAPPENED, RHODESIAN BORDERS WITH BOTH ZAMBIA AND MOZAMBIQUE WOULD BE REOPENED, ECONOMIC SITUATION IN ALL THREE COUNTRIES WOULD IMPROVE AND THERE WOULD BE AN EXCELLENT CHANCE THAT LARGE-SCALE BLOODSHED WOULD BE AVOIDED.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF RHODESIAN PROBLEM WERE NOT SETTLED PEACEFULLY, SOVIETS AND CUBANS WOULD ENTER THE FRAY ON THE SIDE OF THE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS. WHITE MINORITY MIGHT HOLD OUT FOR SOME TIME, PARTICULARLY IF THEY RECEIVED SOUTH AFRICAN ASSISTANCE, BUT EVENTUALLY THEY WOULD LOSE AND SOVIETS WOULD THEN POSE AS THE LIBERATORS OF AFRICA. OAU HAD SPLIT ON ANGOLA BECAUSE THERE WAS A REASONABLE ALTERNATIVE TO SOVIET-BACKED MPLA; THERE WOULD BE NO SUCH SPLIT ON RHODESIA BECAUSE NO SUCH ALTERNATIVE EXISTED. SIMILAR SCENARIO WOULD BE PLAYED OUT IN NAMIBIA. EVENTUALLY SOUTH AFRICA WOULD STAND ALONE. NXUMALO SAID THAT HE FEARED THAT AT THIS POINT, USG WOULD ACTIVELY SUPPORT SOUTH AFRICA TO PREVENT THAT COUNTRY FROM FALLING INTO COMMUNIST HANDS. USG MIGHT BELIEVE THIS COURSE WAS JUSTIFIED FOR GLOBAL POLICY REASONS, BUT ALL AFRICA WOULD CONSIDER U.S. AS PRINCIPAL SUPPORTER AND DEFENDER OF WHITE RACIST REGIME AND USG INTERESTS WOULD SUFFER EVERYWHERE ON THE CONTINENT.

4. COMMENT: THE SOVIETS HAVE LAID A DANGEROUS TRAP FOR US IN SOUTHERN AFRICA; UNLESS WE MOVE VERY QUICKLY WE WILL FALL INTO IT.

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